

Self-evaluation report of third-cycle programmes



Self-evaluation report: Evaluation of third-cycle programmes
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Guidelines for self-evaluation report

Structure and extent

The self-evaluation report is divided into four sections:

- Section 1: Background
- Section 2: Evaluation questions
- Section 3: Overall analysis of the programme
- Section 4: Annex with tables

The first section of the self-evaluation report consists of a background description of the evaluated third-cycle programme (section 1). The background contains an account of how the programme is structured and organised, in order to help the assessors understand the wider context of the programme. In section 2, evaluation questions are posed about the doctoral students' achievement of the qualitative targets, the extent and quality of the third-cycle programme setting, and the internal quality assurance processes. Some qualification descriptors have been selected from the qualitative targets and in the self-evaluation report the HEI describes and assess the methods for, and the assurance of, the doctoral students' achievement of these descriptors. In addition to the questions about the doctoral students' achievement of the qualitative targets, there are also questions about the extent and quality of the third-cycle programme setting and the internal quality assurance processes. These questions deal for instance with supervision, doctoral student influence, the range of courses offered and preparation for professional life. This is followed by an overall analysis of the programme, its strengths and weaknesses (section 3). The self-evaluation report ends with annexes of tables with data about doctoral students and researchers linked to the programme as well as their publications (section 4). The self-evaluation report should comprise about 35 pages, excluding the annexes.

Delimitations

The evaluation is based on the third-cycle subject areas and specialisations in which the HEI offers third-cycle programmes and which are described in the general syllabuses adopted at the HEI.¹ Some delimitations have been made in order to make the evaluation less extensive. The main principle for these delimitations has been to exclude aspects that are reviewed or will be reviewed within the framework of UKÄ's other operational areas or within evaluations made by other Swedish Authorities. Another delimitation that has been made concerns the thesis. Even though it is largely through their theses that doctoral students demonstrate their knowledge and skills, theses will not be assessed within the framework of this evaluation. The main reason for this is that the thesis undergo external

¹ For a more detailed discussion see *Quality Evaluation for third-cycle programmes*, report 2014:18.

review and assessment within the context of the public examination.

Contents

The evaluation comprise of the third-cycle programme in its entirety. This includes both the work on the thesis, the dissertation, course work and other components. Even though theses will not themselves form part of the evaluation material, it is still relevant to appraise the processes that lead up to the finished manuscripts. This can involve, for instance, different peer-review processes that surround the work on the theses through supervision, seminars, workshops and conferences. Different peer-review processes are probably important for most elements described in the self-evaluation reports. It is therefore essential that the HEI should use the self-evaluation reports to describe and analyse how these review processes are structured and what functions they fulfil.

The self-evaluation report is divided into different sections with questions that sometimes overlap. There are, for instance, no clear divisions between the doctoral students' achievement of the qualitative targets on the one hand and the internal quality assurance processes on the other. On the contrary, the doctoral students' likelihood and capacity to attain the qualitative targets are linked to the quality assurance processes and quality culture that prevails in programmes at a HEI. The extent and quality of a third-cycle programme setting also affects the possibility and capacity of the doctoral students to attain the qualitative targets. Therefore some information may have to be repeated in different sections of the self-evaluation report.

Third-cycle programmes differ to a greater extent than first and second-cycle programmes, both within and between HEIs and within and between different third-cycle subjects. The paths that lead up to the award of a Doctoral degree may look very different depending on, for example, disciplinary traditions, and the size of both the third-cycle subject area and the HEI. In addition third-cycle programmes are often tailored for the individual doctoral student and, to a great extent, a specific dissertation project. Describing and assessing third-cycle programmes as a coherent whole therefore demands both consideration and reflection. Both the descriptions in the self-evaluation reports, and the way they are assessed, must necessarily take into account the variation that can be found in one programme. The evaluation questions are intended to give scope for this.

Section 1: Background description

The self-evaluation report starts with a short description of the programme's background, intended to put the programme in a broader context. The background description should answer the following questions:

- For how long has the programme been offered?
- How is the programme structured and organised?
- How does the programme relate to the defined third-cycle study area?²
- How are doctoral students recruited for the programme?
- How are doctoral students financed? What forms of financing exist and what principles apply?
- Describe the composition of the doctoral student group (in terms, for instance, of gender, age and for the programme relevant language skills). What potential possibilities and challenges have you identified in this respect and how have you dealt with them?
- Describe the composition of the group of supervisors (in terms, for instance, of gender, age and for the programme relevant language skills). What potential possibilities and challenges have you identified in this respect and how have you dealt with them?
- How do you guarantee a good physical and psycho-social environment for the doctoral students?
- What proportion of the doctoral students undertake the bulk of their studies somewhere else or in another setting? How do you deal with this?
- What proportion of the supervisors spend most of their time somewhere else or in another setting? How do you deal with this?
- Are there any other background factors that it is important to know about?

² This applies only to university colleges with entitlement to award qualifications in defined third-cycle study areas.

Section 2: Evaluation questions

Section two of the self-evaluation report deals with:

- The doctoral students achievement of the qualitative targets
- The extent and quality of the third-cycle programme setting
- The internal quality assurance processes

This section poses open-ended questions about the actions taken by the HEI to ensure that the doctoral students attain the qualitative targets. To delimit the extent of the evaluation some of the national qualitative targets have been excluded, and sometimes an evaluation question deals only with some aspects of a qualitative target.³ The main principle of selection has been to exclude the qualitative targets or aspects of targets that are most often assessed through the dissertation and the public examination. It is reasonable to assume, however, that there are differences in the way the qualitative targets are trained and examined depending on how an individual dissertation project has been structured, and also depending on differences in disciplinary traditions. The open-ended evaluation questions are intended to provide an opportunity for subject and programme specific descriptions and analyses.

Some of the evaluation questions are relatively straightforward in the sense that they refer only to part of a qualitative target. This applies, for instance, to the first evaluation question that deals with how doctoral students attain broad knowledge and understanding of the research field. To answer this question the HEI should account for what broad knowledge means within the scope of the programme offered. The HEI should also describe, analyse and evaluate how it works throughout the programme so that doctoral students shall attain the qualitative target. In addition the HEI should account for, and evaluate, the methods used to assess the doctoral students' achievement of the qualitative target.

However, some of the evaluation questions are linked to an entire qualitative target, which makes them more complex, as the qualitative targets often comprise several different elements. When questions are posed about the qualitative targets in their entirety, they therefore become more comprehensive. This applies, for instance, to the

³ For all of the national qualitative targets see the Annex *Doctoral degrees*.

evaluation questions about the doctoral students' ability to communicate. Both oral and written communication is included in the qualitative target. In addition, the target includes the ability to do so both in an academic setting and with society in general. Furthermore, it comprises the ability to do so (communicate orally and in writing in academic settings and with society in general) in both national and international contexts.

In order to respond to this kind of evaluation questions it is important that the account includes a description, an analysis and an evaluation of how the HEI work with all the aspects of the qualitative target throughout the programme. The answer should also include a description, an analysis and an evaluation of the methods used to assess that all doctoral students attain every aspect of the qualitative target. The description may include, for instance, the peer-review components (such as supervision sessions, seminars, workshops, conferences etc.) used to aid doctoral students to attain the qualitative target. In addition, account should be made for other activities (lecture series, courses, etc.) intended to support the doctoral students' achievement of the qualitative targets.

The questions about the doctoral students' achievement of the qualitative targets are followed by evaluation questions about the extent and quality of the third-cycle programme setting, and the quality assurance processes linked to the programme. In order to answer the questions the HEI should describe the part of the third-cycle programme setting to which the doctoral students have access and describe the quality enhancement work that takes place. The HEI should also analyse the strengths and weaknesses of both the extent and quality of the third-cycle programme setting and the internal quality assurance processes in use. In addition the HEI should assess to what extent these quality assurance processes are applied systematically so that they benefit all doctoral students.

With regard to the descriptions of the extent and quality of the third-cycle programme setting in this section and in the annex with tables the fundamental point of departure is "that the quality, breadth and long-term sustainability of the setting is to be assessed from the perspective of the third-cycle students" as stated in the Govt. Bill *Third-cycle programmes with profiles and quality* (2008/09:134) (p. 37). In other words the assessment is to be based on the extent and quality of the research and teaching to which the third-cycle students have access.

The bill also provides guidance on what characterises a third-cycle programme setting of high quality and sufficient extent. There has to be a high quality research environment, for which the following reason is given: "The quality of the research undertaken in the subject area, its depth, is important in enabling the doctoral students to make a substantial contribution to the development of knowledge in the subject area". In addition, the setting has to be of adequate breadth and extent, the reason being "the extent and breadth of the environment – in the form of the number of individuals and the disciplinary breadth they represent – is at the same time important to provide access to

several different perspectives and specialisations and create conditions for long-term development of the research as well as for the stability and continuity of supervision etc.” Extent also includes the number of doctoral students, which should be large enough to create interactions. This does not necessarily mean only the number of doctoral students in the programme evaluated but can also include the networks within the programme setting to which the doctoral students have access. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on the importance of taking into account the doctoral students’ possibilities of interaction with the national and international research community as well as society at large. The stability of the setting is also stressed in several places in the bill. Resources for supervision and teaching should therefore be sizeable and stable. It is, however, up to the HEIs to describe with greater precision what is included in a third-cycle programme setting as well as how it is to be demarcated and defined.

Some of the evaluation questions deal with how doctoral students are prepared for their future careers both within and outside academia. In responding to these questions it may be relevant to account for whether and to what extent doctoral students are employed within the department to teach or undertake administrative or other duties. Some of the questions about the doctoral students’ achievement of the qualitative targets can also be linked to competencies that are significant for future careers both in academia and elsewhere. This applies, for example, to the question referred to above about the doctoral students’ capacity to communicate as well the question dealing with the ability to plan and undertake advanced tasks using appropriate methods within predetermined time frames. These questions are intended to provide HEIs with an opportunity to describe the actions taken to prepare doctoral students for a professional life after graduation.

Learning outcome: Knowledge and understanding

1. How do you work to ensure that the doctoral students acquire broad knowledge and understanding of the research field? In what ways do you ensure this? Describe, analyse and evaluate the structure and content of the programme.
2. How do you work to ensure that the doctoral students acquire broad knowledge and understanding of research methodology in the research field? In what ways do you ensure this? Describe, analyse and evaluate the structure and content of the programme.

Learning outcome: Competence and skills

3. How do you work to ensure that the doctoral students develop the ability to plan and use appropriate methods to undertake research and other qualified tasks within predetermined time frames? In what ways do you ensure this? Describe, analyse and evaluate the structure and content of the programme.
4. How do you work to ensure that the doctoral students develop the ability in both national and international contexts to present and discuss research and research findings authoritatively in speech and writing and in dialogue with:
 - a) The academic community? In what ways do you ensure this? Describe, analyse and evaluate the structure and content of the programme.
 - b) Society in general? In what ways do you ensure this? Describe, analyse and evaluate the structure and content of the programme.
5. How do you work to ensure that the doctoral students develop the capacity to contribute to social development and support the learning of others both through research and education and in some other qualified professional capacity? In what ways do you ensure this? Describe, analyse and evaluate the structure and content of the programme.

Learning outcome: Judgement and approach

6. How do you work to ensure that the doctoral students acquire intellectual autonomy and disciplinary rectitude as well as the ability to make assessments of research ethics? In what ways do you ensure that this takes place? Describe, analyse and evaluate the structure and content of the programme.
7. How do you work to ensure that the doctoral students acquire specialised insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used? In what ways do you ensure this? Describe, analyse and evaluate the structure and content of the programme.

Other evaluation questions

8. In what ways are opinions on the third-cycle programme collected from doctoral students and others, including alumni? How are these opinions used for enhancing the programme?
9. How do doctoral students take part in decision-making procedures, including preparations, in issues relating to third-cycle programmes?

10. What actions are taken to ensure that doctoral students are offered a range of high quality courses that are consistent with the general and individual syllabuses?
11. How does the HEI work to guarantee an adequate long-term supply of supervision resources? What actions are taken to guarantee a high standard and adequate amount of supervision? What forms do the continued development of the scientific and pedagogical qualifications of supervisors and teachers take?
12. What is done to enable a change of supervisor when needed?
13. What is done to broaden the third-cycle programme setting for doctoral students? Account for the national and international networks that doctoral students and supervisors belong to that are important for the programme. How are doctoral students included in these networks? In what ways do the networks supplement the third-cycle programme setting with regard to extent and quality?
14. How does the HEI guarantee the quality of theses that are accepted for public examination?
15. How are doctoral students prepared during the programme for careers both within and outside academia in Sweden and abroad? Does the HEI work with alumni to inform and prepare doctoral students for different career possibilities? If so, how?
16. Is there anything else that is important for the assessment of the quality of the evaluated third-cycle programme that has not been raised elsewhere in the self-evaluation report or annex with tables?

Section 3: Overall analysis of the programme

The final section of the self-evaluation report consists of an overall analysis of the third-cycle programme in its entirety. The analysis covers the whole programme from the recruitment of doctoral students to the award of the degree. The HEI describes and analyses the programme and links the analysis to the national qualitative targets.⁴ The HEI gives an overall account of how it works to enable doctoral students to attain the qualitative targets and how it ensures that they have done so. The HEI describes and analyses the different components of the programme that doctoral students complete and how the internal quality assurance processes help the doctoral students in their progress towards their qualification. The HEI also discuss the extent and quality of the third-cycle programme setting and describes how this contributes to the doctoral students' achievement of the qualitative targets.

With regard to internal quality assurance processes linked to the qualitative targets the HEI should also include what routines it has to assure the quality of the doctoral students' work on their dissertations. In addition the HEI should describe and analyse the peer-review processes used to monitor and assess the doctoral students' progress during their studies. The HEI should link these and other aspects of the internal quality assurance processes to an overall discussion of the doctoral students' achievement of the qualitative targets.

In analysing the third-cycle programme setting the HEI should show that its depth and quality is sufficient to enhance the possibilities for doctoral students to make a substantial contribution to the development of knowledge within the third-cycle subject area. The HEI should also describe and analyse what is done to provide the doctoral students with access to a third-cycle programme setting that is broad and extensive enough for them to encounter different perspectives and specialisations during their studies. This should be linked to an overall discussion of the doctoral students' achievement of the qualitative targets.

Describe and analyse the weaknesses and strengths to be found in the programme offered with regard to the doctoral students' achievement of the qualitative targets, internal quality assurance processes and the extent and quality of the third-cycle programme setting. Account should be made for the measures that have been adopted or planned to remedy the weaknesses and problems identified, as well as measures made to retain the strengths of the programme.

The evaluation will be based primarily on what is done or have been planned to improve and enhance the programme.

⁴ See the annex *Doctoral qualifications*.

The overall analysis should answer the following questions:

- How does the HEI work to ensure that the doctoral students attain the qualitative targets? In what ways does the HEI ensure that all doctoral students have attained all the qualitative targets?
- In what ways do the internal quality assurance processes and the extent and quality of the third-cycle programme setting contribute to the doctoral students' achievement of all the qualitative targets? What strengths and weaknesses have been identified? How does the HEI retain the strengths and how does it deal with the weaknesses?

Section 4: Tables

- Use tables 1a and 1b to account for the active doctoral students during the current semester.
- In table 2 account for the active principle supervisors and active supervisors who are not principle supervisors (assistant supervisors).
- Attach lists of papers by all of the supervisors listed in table 2 that have been published or accepted for publication during the last five years.
- Attach lists of papers by all of the doctoral students listed in tables 1a, 1b or 1c that have been published or accepted for publication.
- Account in table 3 for all the other researchers, including post-doctoral students, linked to the third-cycle programme. State clearly how the expertise of these researchers benefits the doctoral students. Describe how these researchers form part of the third-cycle programme setting.
- Attach lists of papers by all of the researchers listed in table 3 that have been published or accepted for publication during the last five years.
- Attach a list of all doctoral and licentiate dissertations that have been given pass grades during the last five years.

Table 1a. Admitted/enrolled third-cycle students, without current study interruption, who have completed less than half of their third-cycle studies in the programme under evaluation

Name	Third-cycle subject area	Year of birth	Gender	Year admitted	Form of financing* and extent (per cent)	Degree of activity in third-cycle programme during XX semester 20XX (per cent)	Average teaching/administrative duties that the third-cycle student has undertaken during the most recent academic year (per cent)
Third-cycle student 1							
Third-cycle student 2							
Third-cycle student 3							
Etc.							

* Indicate the form of financing and its extent. Examples of forms of financing are: doctoral studentships, doctoral grants, stipends, some other post at the HEI, employment as a physician or the like, municipally employed doctoral student, externally employed doctoral student, other employment outside the HEI and other forms of funding. Note that a third-cycle student may have two or more forms of financing during the same semester. If so, indicate all forms and what proportion they constitute.

Table 1b. Admitted/enrolled third-cycle students, without current study interruption, who have completed half or more (half-way) of their third-cycle studies in the programme under evaluation

Name	Third-cycle subject area	Year of birth	Gender	Year admitted	Form of financing* and extent (per cent)	Degree of activity in third-cycle programme during XX semester 20XX (per cent)	Average teaching/administrative duties that the third-cycle student has undertaken during the most recent academic year (per cent)
Third-cycle student 1							
Third-cycle student 2							
Third-cycle student 3							
Etc.							

* Indicate the form of financing and its extent. Examples of forms of financing are: doctoral studentships, doctoral grants, stipends, some other post at the HEI, employment as a physician or the like, municipally employed doctoral student, externally employed doctoral student, other employment outside the HEI and other forms of funding. Note that a third-cycle student may have two or more forms of financing during the same semester. If so, indicate all forms and what proportion they constitute.

Table 1c. Third-cycle students who have been awarded a third-cycle degree during the last twelve months by the programme under evaluation

Name	Third-cycle subject area	Year of birth	Gender	Year admitted	Form of financing* and extent (per cent)	Degree of activity in third-cycle programme during XX semester 20XX (per cent)	Average teaching/administrative duties that the third-cycle student has undertaken during the most recent academic year (per cent)
Third-cycle student 1							
Third-cycle student 2							
Third-cycle student 3							
Etc.							

* Indicate the form of financing and its extent. Examples of forms of financing are: doctoral studentships, doctoral grants, stipends, some other post at the HEI, employment as a physician or the like, municipally employed doctoral student, externally employed doctoral student, other employment outside the HEI and other forms of funding. Note that a third-cycle student may have two or more forms of financing during the same semester. If so, indicate all forms and what proportion they constitute.

Table 2. Supervisors for third-cycle students in table 1a-c

Name	Year of birth	Gender	Position*	Terms of employment (until further notice or fixed-term appointment **)	Employment at the HEI (per cent)	Academic title	Research subject area	Percentage of full-time in the programme under evaluation (per cent)	Principle supervisor for doctoral students in the programme under evaluation (No. of doctoral students)***	Supervisor (not principle supervisor) for doctoral students in the programme under evaluation (No. of doctoral students)****
NN										
NN										
Etc.										

* Examples of categories of positions; Professor, adjunct professor, senior lecturer, adjunct senior lecturer, lecturer, adjunct lecturer, career-development position (including post-doctoral appointments), other research or teaching position with doctoral degree and other research or teaching position without doctoral degree.

** Give the dates on which fixed-term appointments end.

*** Number of doctoral students, in the evaluated programme, for whom NN is appointed principal supervisor.

**** Number of doctoral students, in the evaluated programme, for whom NN is appointed assistant supervisor.

Table 3. Other researchers important for the programme under evaluation

Name	Year of birth	Gender	Position*	Terms of employment (until further notice or fixed-term appointment)**	Employment at the HEI (per cent)	Academic title	Research subject area	Percentage of full-time in the programme under evaluation (per cent)	What role does this researcher play in the programme under evaluation
NN									
NN									
NN									
Etc.									

* Examples of categories of positions; Professor, adjunct professor, senior lecturer, adjunct senior lecturer, lecturer, adjunct lecturer, career-development position (including post-doctoral appointments), other research or teaching position with doctoral degree and other research or teaching position without doctoral degree.

** Give the dates on which fixed-term appointments end.

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Annex

Degree of Doctor

Scope

A Degree of Doctor is awarded after the third-cycle student has completed a study programme of 240 credits in a subject in which third-cycle teaching is offered.

Outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

For the Degree of Doctor the third-cycle student shall

- demonstrate broad knowledge and systematic understanding of the research field as well as advanced and up-to-date specialised knowledge in a limited area of this field, and
- demonstrate familiarity with research methodology in general and the methods of the specific field of research in particular.

Competence and skills

For the Degree of Doctor the third-cycle student shall

- demonstrate the capacity for scholarly analysis and synthesis as well as to review and assess new and complex phenomena, issues and situations autonomously and critically
- demonstrate the ability to identify and formulate issues with scholarly precision critically, autonomously and creatively, and to plan and use appropriate methods to undertake research and other qualified tasks within predetermined time frames and to review and evaluate such work
- demonstrate through a dissertation the ability to make a significant contribution to the formation of knowledge through his or her own research
- demonstrate the ability in both national and international contexts to present and discuss research and research findings authoritatively in speech and writing and in dialogue with the academic community and society in general
- demonstrate the ability to identify the need for further knowledge and
- demonstrate the capacity to contribute to social development and support the learning of others both through research and education and in some other qualified professional capacity.

Judgement and approach

For the Degree of Doctor the third-cycle student shall

- demonstrate intellectual autonomy and disciplinary rectitude as well as the ability to make

- assessments of research ethics, and
- demonstrate specialised insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used.

Research thesis (doctoral thesis)

For the Degree of Doctor the third-cycle student shall have been awarded a pass grade for a research thesis (doctoral thesis) of at least 120 credits.

Miscellaneous

Specific requirements determined by each higher education institution itself within the parameters of the requirements laid down in this qualification descriptor shall also apply for a Degree of Doctor with a defined specialisation.

(SFS 2013:617)

The Swedish Higher Education Authority is a government agency in the higher education sector. The Authority evaluates the quality of higher education, exercises legal supervision, reviews efficiency and is responsible for statistics and monitoring the sector.

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